

# My haven: Wildlife TV presenter, Saba Douglas-Hamilton, 44, at her family lodge in Kenya

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Saba reveals the stories behind her favourite possessions

## TOP TABLE

Made from a single tree root, this table is the heart of Elephant Watch Camp where our charity Save The Elephants is based. It's where we entertain our guests, plan our operations and organise safaris. The idea of Elephant Watch, borrowed from whale-watching, was to give our guests the same intimate experiences with elephants that we have as researchers. Watching elephants can be as addictive as a soap opera, from the spats and fights to the unfolding tragedy of a huddle of orphans.

## BEAUTY OF BEADS

I often give talks to raise funds for the charity, and this is my favourite outfit. It was made by my mother in the 70s and beaded by the Masai women she worked with. When I was born they spat on her breasts as a blessing to keep her milk flowing – spittle is symbolic of rain, on which all life depends – and the head beader, Esther, became my second mother, showing me the Masai way to raise children. The tradition of beading speaks volumes about their appreciation of beauty.

## ON THE TRAIL

You have to be utterly in tune with what's going on around you when you're filming wildlife, and good binoculars like this Swarovski pair are key to success. One of my specialities is tracking down leopards. The trick is to head out before first light and listen for alarm calls from animals, which helps you home in on the predators. Once you've found your leopard you must try to read what's going on in its mind. If you're lucky it'll snatch an impala right under your nose, but you have to be insanely patient.

## MY FIRST LOVE

This photo of me, right, with a baby genet cat – gorgeous, slender, nocturnal carnivores related to civets – was taken by my parents in Tanzania where we lived while my dad was doing the research on elephants in the 70s that led to him discovering that herds are led by matriarchs rather than bulls. We already had a vulture and a mongoose for pets, and one day two tiny orphaned genet cats were rescued by a ranger and we decided to raise them. It was the first time I fell in love.

## TUSK FORCE

Elephants move so far so fast it's almost impossible to keep track of them for any length of time. We use satellite tracking collars with VHF receivers like the one I'm holding at Save The Elephants to monitor the movements of over 100 elephants across Africa, then we use the data to secure corridors for them. I can monitor them through Google Earth on my computer, and I love seeing how they use the landscape as it gives an insight into how we can meet their needs.

## CRUSADERS!

My parents, Iain and Oria, wrote *Among The Elephants* in the 70s about their time here, and later *Battle For The Elephants* which recounts their ten-year struggle to alert the world to the horrific reality of the ivory trade. Their elephant census proved that Africa had lost over half its elephants in just 20 years and led the UN to ban the international ivory trade in 1989. Sadly there's been a resurgence in poaching, and we're in the thick of a new battle for the future of elephants.

**Saba's new documentary *This Wild Life* will be on BBC2 next month. Text ELEP33 £5 to 70070 to donate to Save the Elephants and make a difference today**



Saba as a little girl with a baby genet cat